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ABSTRACT

To aid school districts in examining what Montana citizens expect of public school graduates, a task force composed of representatives from public, private, professional, and citizens' organizations concentrated its efforts in three main areas: college entrance, vocational education, and world of work. The committee considered commentary from students, employers, teacher education units, and professional groups, along with research from a wide variety of sources, in preparing a statement addressing seven basic academic competencies that should be developed throughout a student's K-12 educational experience. The pamphlet details specific expectations of students' competencies in the areas of reading, writing, speaking and listening, mathematics, reasoning, studying, and career awareness. The appendixes list Montanans' 15 goals for education and provide a schematic illustration of the process. (MLF)

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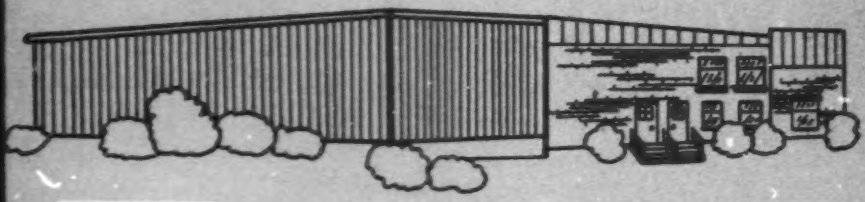
Excellence in Montana Schools

1983 Task Force Report



EA 017 085

Office of Public Instruction
Ed Argenbright
State Superintendent

Education plays a significant role in the life of Montanans, and we have always had high expectations for our public schools. To aid districts in examining what Montana citizens expect of public school graduates, I appointed a Task Force on Excellence in Montana Schools. This talented group of individuals, whose efforts are deeply appreciated, has now finished its deliberations.

I am pleased to provide you with a copy of the Task Force's report which was submitted to the Board of Public Education at its April 1983 meeting. If you have questions or comments about the Task Force or its recommendations, please let me know.

Ed Argenbright
State Superintendent

BA11283

This report was compiled by the Task Force on Excellence in Education commissioned by the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Its purpose is to improve the academic preparation of all Montana high school graduates. The statement addresses seven basic academic competencies that should be developed throughout a student's K-12 educational experience.

The committee limited its report to academic preparation and did not include recommendations on the teaching of values and citizenship. These very important areas are included in an existing document entitled *Montanans' Goals for Education* (see Appendix A) and are endorsed by the Task Force.

As Appendix C shows, the Task Force consists of representatives from public, private, professional and citizens organizations. The Task Force chose to concentrate its efforts in three main areas: college entrance, vocational education, and world of work (Appendix B).

The Task Force considered commentary from students, employers, teacher education units, and professional groups. Research from a wide variety of sources was presented by Office of Public Instruction personnel.

Whether high school graduates go to college, vocational-technical school, other training, or directly into the work force, all graduates need to possess a set of basic competencies in communication, computation, thinking and work related skills. Each competency must be performed in order for the graduate to participate successfully in our society. Obviously, basic skills neither constitute nor replace the subjects and fields of the school curriculum. Basic mental and manipulative skills grow concomitantly while students interact with the subject matter of the whole school curriculum. Basic competencies, learned and applied while studying the full scope of the school curriculum, continue to serve the person throughout life, regardless of style or calling. The Task Force believes that the 35 cognitive skills originally identified by the College Board's Project EQuality provide a floor of solid capability to support both study and work beyond high school for all Montana graduates.

Reading Expectations:

- The ability to identify and comprehend the main and subordinate ideas in a written work and to summarize the ideas in one's own words.

- The ability to recognize different purposes and methods of writing, to identify a writer's point of view and tone, and to interpret a writer's meaning inferentially as well as literally.

- The ability to separate one's personal opinions and assumptions from a writer's.

- The ability to vary one's reading speed and method (survey, skim, review, question, and master) according to the type of material and one's purpose for reading.

- The ability to use the features of books and other reference materials, such as table of contents, preface, introduction, titles and subtitles, index, glossary, appendix, bibliography.

- The ability to define unfamiliar words by decoding, using contextual clues, or by using a dictionary.

Writing Expectations:

- The ability to conceive ideas about a topic for the purpose of writing.
- The ability to organize, select, and relate ideas and to outline and develop them in coherent paragraphs.
- The ability to write succinctly and accurately with appropriate detail.
- The ability to write standard English sentences with correct:
  - sentence structure
  - verb forms
  - punctuation, capitalization, possessives, plural forms, and other matters of mechanics
  - word choice and spelling
- The ability to vary one's writing style, including vocabulary and sentence structure, for different readers and purposes.
- The ability to improve one's own writing by restructuring, correcting errors, and rewriting.
- The ability to gather information from primary and secondary sources; to write a report using this research; to quote, paraphrase, and summarize accurately; and to cite sources properly.

Speaking & Listening Expectations:

- The ability to engage critically and constructively in the exchange of ideas, particularly during class discussions and conferences with instructors.

- The ability to answer and ask questions coherently and concisely, and to follow spoken instructions.

- The ability to identify and comprehend the main and subordinate ideas in lectures and discussions, and to report accurately what others have said.

- The ability to conceive and develop ideas about a topic for the purpose of speaking to a group; to choose and organize related ideas; to present them clearly in standard English; and to evaluate similar presentations by others.

- The ability to vary one's use of spoken language to suit different situations.

Mathematical Expectations:

- The ability to perform, with reasonable accuracy, the computations of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division using natural numbers, fractions, decimals, and integers.

- The ability to make and use measurements in both traditional and metric units.

- The ability to use effectively the mathematics of:

  - integers, fractions and decimals
  - ratios, proportions, and percentages
  - algebra
  - geometry

- The ability to make estimates and approximations and to judge the reasonableness of a result.

- The ability to formulate and solve a problem in mathematical terms.

- The ability to select and use appropriate approaches and tools in solving problems (mental computation, trial and error, paper-and-pencil techniques, calculator, and computer).

- The ability to use elementary concepts of probability and statistics.

Reasoning Expectations:

- The ability to identify and formulate problems, as well as the ability to propose and evaluate ways to solve them.
- The ability to recognize and use inductive and deductive reasoning and to recognize fallacies in reasoning.
- The ability to draw reasonable conclusions from information found in various sources, whether written, spoken, tabular, or graphic, and to defend one's conclusions rationally.
- The ability to comprehend, develop, and use concepts and generalizations.
- The ability to distinguish between fact and opinion.

Studying Expectations:

- The ability to set study goals and priorities consistent with stated course objectives and one's own progress, to establish surroundings and habits conducive to learning independently or with others, and to follow a schedule that accounts for both short- and long-term projects.

- The ability to locate and use resources external to the classroom (for example, libraries, computers, interviews, and direct observation) and to incorporate knowledge from such sources into the learning process.

- The ability to develop and use general and specialized vocabularies and to use them for reading, writing, speaking, listening, computing, and studying.

- The ability to understand and to follow customary instructions for academic work in order to recall, comprehend, analyze, summarize and report the main ideas from reading, lectures, and other academic experience; and to synthesize knowledge and apply it to new situations.

- The ability to prepare for various types of examinations and to devise strategies for pacing, attempting or omitting questions, thinking, writing, and editing according to type of examination; to satisfy other assessments of learning in meeting course objectives such as laboratory performance, class participation, simulation, and students' evaluations.

- The ability to accept constructive criticism and learn from it.

Career Expectations:

The competencies previously identified in this report focus upon the acquisition of basic learning skills which are necessary for learning to occur in all academic subject areas. In addition, the curriculum and the school environment must also focus upon career skills. Knowledge of the elements of the world of work is essential for all students regardless of their post-high school plans. (These aspects may be taught in a single course or be conscientiously designed into the total learning experience.) Regardless of derivation, each student should possess the following:

- The ability to differentiate the roles, the rights and the responsibilities of employers and employees.
- The ability to take responsibility and to demonstrate initiative and positive attitude toward employment.
- The ability to gather and analyze information on occupational opportunities, to ascertain relevant employment requirements and to predict trends in the labor market.
- The ability to prepare personal documents for employment – letter of application, resume, forms.
- The ability to gather and analyze the basic requirements for a particular occupation and the necessary schooling required for that occupation.

Recommendations:

In addition to the expectations identified for Montana's high school graduates we recommend:

1. That the Board of Public Education adopt these expectations and, through the accreditation standards and processes, assure that these expectations are attainable through the program offerings of each school district, i.e., language arts, math, science, social studies, foreign language, visual arts, performing arts, vocational education, health and physical education.

2. That the Board of Public Education insure that these expectations are incorporated into teacher certification standards.

3. That the Board of Public Education and the Office of Public Instruction work jointly towards adopting methods for achieving those expectations. Specifically:

   a. that the general public be informed;
   b. that assistance be provided to all school districts;
   c. that assessment instruments relative to these expectations be made available to local districts.

4. That local boards develop policy which insures that the instructional program addressing these expectations be specifically interpreted to the students.

5. That the Board of Regents and governing authorities of private colleges insure that teacher training programs incorporate these expectations.

APPENDIX A

Montanans' Goals for Education

1. Through Montana education, each student should develop skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening.

2. Through Montana education, each student should develop habits and skills necessary to maintain physical fitness and mental health.

3. Through Montana education, each student should learn the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

4. Through Montana education, each student should develop and apply skills which define and fulfill his or her learning needs throughout life.

5. Through Montana education, each student should learn his or her career opportunities and capabilities.

6. Through Montana education, each student should develop and apply standards for judging his or her behavior.

7. Through Montana education, each student should acquire a positive attitude toward learning processes.

8. Through Montana education, each student should learn to live in harmony with others.

9. Through Montana education, each student should live in harmony with and improve the environment.

10. Through Montana education, each student should develop an understanding of his or her role and the roles of others as members of a family.

11. Through Montana education, each student should be able to recognize, define and seek solutions to problems.

12. Through Montana education, each student should be able to cope with change.

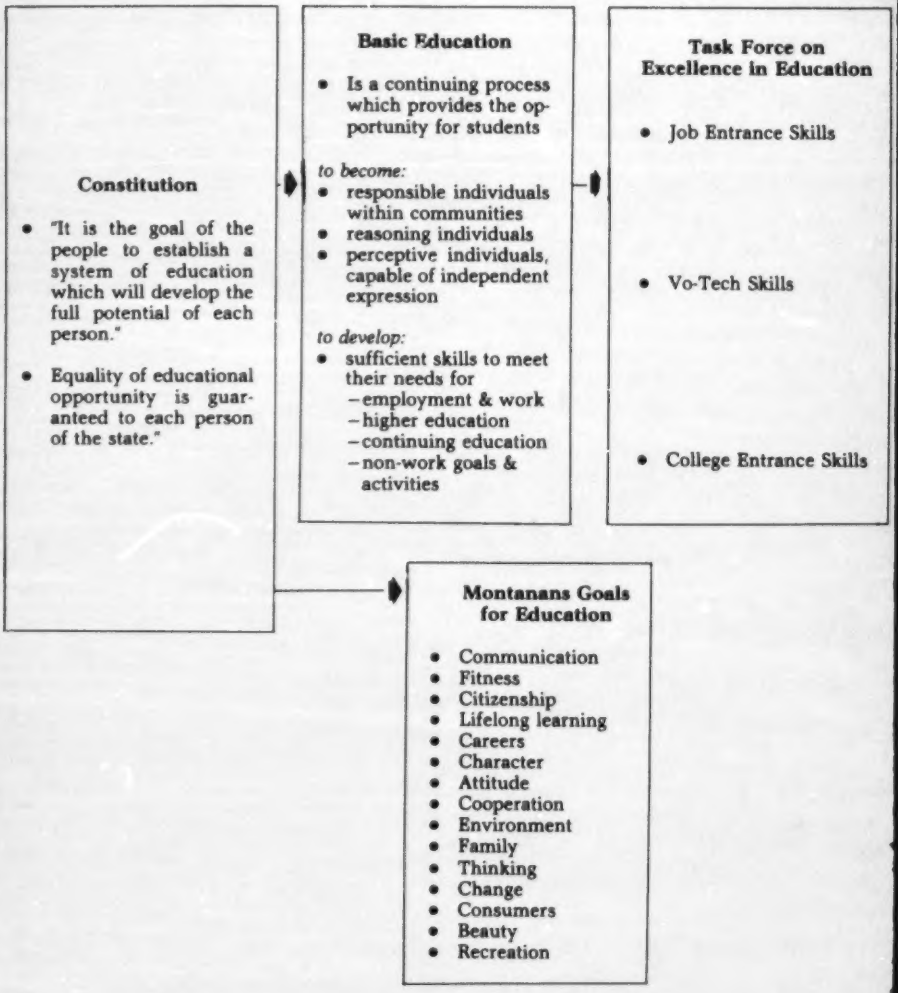
13. Through Montana education, each student should acquire knowledge and skills to purchase goods and services that are appropriate to his or her needs and resources.

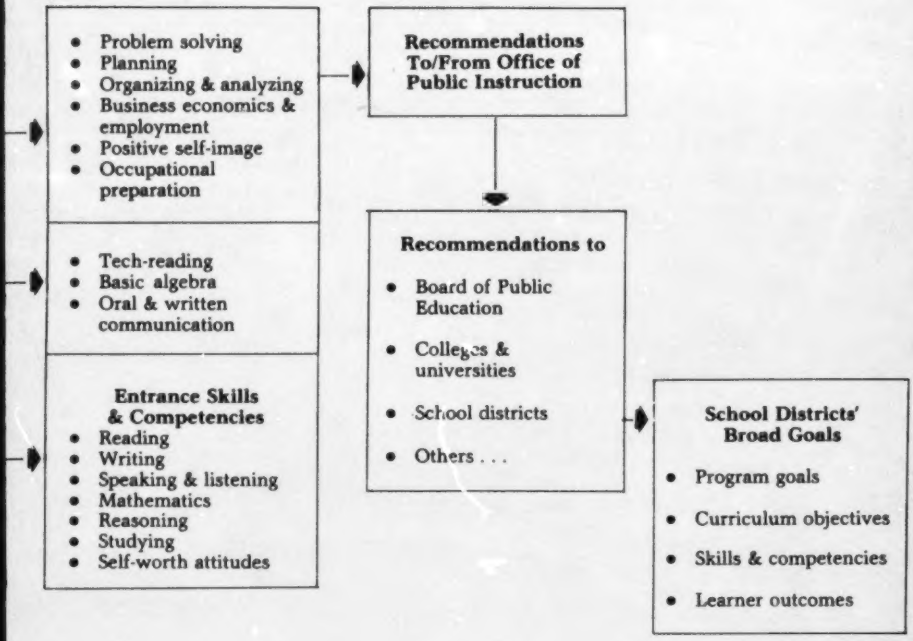
14. Through Montana education, each student should acquire knowledge and skills for developing an appreciation of beauty.

15. Through Montana education, each student should acquire attitudes and knowledge needed for participation in both mental and physical recreational activities.

APPENDIX B

A Schematic of the Process


Constitution
• "It is the goal of the people to establish a system of education which will develop the full potential of each person."
• Equality of educational opportunity is guaranteed to each person of the state."
Basic Education
• Is a continuing process which provides the opportunity for students
to become:
• responsible individuals within communities
• reasoning individuals
• perceptive individuals, capable of independent expression
to develop:
• sufficient skills to meet their needs for
– employment & work
– higher education
– continuing education
– non-work goals & activities
Task Force on Excellence in Education
• Job Entrance Skills
• Vo-Tech Skills
• College Entrance Skills
Montanans Goals for Education
• Communication
• Fitness
• Citizenship
• Lifelong learning
• Careers
• Character
• Attitude
• Cooperation
• Environment
• Family
• Thinking
• Change
• Consumers
• Beauty
• Recreation


• Problem solving
• Planning
• Organizing & analyzing
• Business economics & employment
• Positive self-image
• Occupational preparation
• Tech-reading
• Basic algebra
• Oral & written communication
Entrance Skills & Competencies
• Reading
• Writing
• Speaking & listening
• Mathematics
• Reasoning
• Studying
• Self-worth attitudes
Recommendations To/From Office of Public Instruction
Recommendations to
• Board of Public Education
• Colleges & universities
• School districts
• Others . . .
School Districts' Broad Goals
• Program goals
• Curriculum objectives
• Skills & competencies
• Learner outcomes

Task Force on Excellence

Left to right (standing): Dr. Harold Anderson, Earle Reimer, Ralph Kroon, Sharon Finney, Don Holland, Ralph Eudaily, Henry Jorgensen, Bob Brown, Doug Kelley, Gary Curtis, Eric Feaver, Jim Longin, and Dennis Lerum.
Left to right (sitting): Dr. Hidde Van Duym, Owen Robinson, Ted Hazelbaker, Mary Pace, Candy Brown, Dr. Alex Capdeville, and Harriett Meloy.

APPENDIX C

Task Force on Excellence Members

Mr. Ted Hazelbaker, Chairman
Independent

Mr. Ralph Eudaily, Chairman
House Education Committee

Mr. Bob Brown, Chairman
Senate Education Committee

Mr. Earle Reimer
Association of Non-public Schools of Montana

Mr. Eric Feaver
Montana Education Association

Mr. Owen Robinson
Montana School Boards Association

Mr. Jim Longin
School Administrators of Montana

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Dr. Carrol Krause
Higher Education

Ms. Sharon Finney
Parent Teachers Association

Ms. Candy Brown
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Mr. Dennis Lerum
Vocational-Technical Centers

Mr. Ralph Kroon
Rural Education

Mr. Henry Jorgensen
Montana Retired Teachers Association

Mr. Bill Yellowtail
Montana Inter-Tribal Policy Board

Ms. Mary Pace
Board of Regents

Mr. Bill Roberts
Disadvantaged/Handicapped

Dr. Harold Anderson
College of Great Falls

Mr. Gary Curtis
Department of Labor & Industry

Mr. Don Holland
Agriculture

Dr. Alex Capdeville
Vocational Education Advisory Council

Mr. Doug Kelley
Non-public Christian Schools

Mr. Russ Ritter
Montana Chamber of Commerce